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Wise, Henry A. (Henry Alexander), 1806-1876.

Letter from Governor Wise, to the editors of
Enquirer, Richmond, Nov. 19, 1857. [Richmond]

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LETTER

FROM

GOVERNOR WISE.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE RICHMOND ENQUIRER:

RICHMOND, Nov. 19, 1857.

GENTLEMEN,

You have seen proper to interrogate me, through the "Enquirer," as to the position I occupy touching the election of a Senator of the United States; and, believing that they are in good faith, fair and not unfriendly, I promptly reply to your questions as publicly as they are put.

For more than twelve months rumors have been circulated that it was my desire and design to oust Mr. Hunter, if I could, from his seat in the Senate of the United States; and my name in that connection has been bandied about in conversation and by the press, with a license which assumed the air of authority. By whom, with what motive, to what end, these rumors were started, it is not my purpose now to discuss. My object is to allay excitement and prevent division in the Democratic party of Virginia; and to that end I aver, that these rumors are unauthorized by any thing said or done by me, that they are without foundation, and I defy the production of the proof or evidence that I have ever expressed or manifested the imputed *desire or design*.

After my arduous struggle in 1855 for the salvation of the Democratic party, I fondly hoped to have the sympathy and support of all its sections in Virginia, and to be able to act with all in equal confidence, and to serve all in the office I now fill. I regret to say that in this I was disappointed. A short time only elapsed, after entering upon my duties, before a jealousy and a distrust were seen where I most expected confidence and friendly aid and counsel. I did my best, by turning away from this, to avert both its cause and its effect. But, inopportunately for harmony, the contest for the nomination for the Presidency came on early in 1856, and my preference for Mr. Buchanan, entertained for many years, was again made known. I adhered to his nomination, for reasons which now must be too obvious to every candid and conservative patriot and Democrat, to need either argument or excuse. No other nominee of the party could, probably, have been elected. There was not one of his competitors for whom I would not cheerfully have voted. I had, in fact, aided, among other friends of Mr. Buchanan, in 1852, in nominating Mr. Pierce, and in 1855, had intimated my approval of other candidates. But, having for his eminent abilities and services preferred Mr. Buchanan in 1844, 1848, and 1852, and deeming him the only available candidate in 1856, I co-operated zealously with his friends in securing for his nomination the vote of Virginia. But no effort was made, no resort had to any means, to secure this, which could justly be complained of by his rivals and their friends. He had, without effort, comparatively, two-thirds of the dele-

gation of Virginia at Cincinnati, and that majority did not fully represent the constituencies which preferred him. And notwithstanding the attempts of those opposed to his nomination, to destroy the prestige of Virginia by attempting to split her delegation in the Convention, and, in fact, to nullify a majority by a minority, by dividing her districts as well as the State, and to count the Old Dominion nought in the nomination, her delegation stood firm as it had done at Baltimore in 1852, when thirty-four successive ballots were cast for James Buchanan, and the vote of Virginia decided the Convention in his favor. The election proved how pre-eminently popular he was in this "good old Commonwealth." Thirty thousand majority proclaimed him the choice of Virginia, by far more than two-thirds, if not four-fifths of the Democratic voters. A majority of the *politicians in place* preferred others, but the people preferred him by an overwhelming, almost unanimous voice.

The election was marked by extraordinary manifestations. The contest was: WHETHER SECTIONALISM, CAUSED BY THE FOREIGN INFLUENCE OF OLD ENGLAND AND CANADA, OPERATING IN THE FORM OF BLACK REPUBLICANISM UPON NEW YORK AND THE NEW ENGLAND STATES, AND UPON THE LAKE BORDERS OF OTHER STATES, SHOULD INVADE US FURTHER SOUTH; OR OUR OWN NATIONALISM OF DEMOCRACY SHOULD DRIVE IT BACK FURTHER NORTH.

Pennsylvania decided that issue; but for a time it was extremely doubtful. And in the midst of that doubt there was heard a low muttering in the South of a *subdued, but sullen discontent among some few of those who voted even for Mr. Buchanan's election*. The feeling, *grumbled* rather than openly expressed by them, was of a hope that the Black Flag might be raised over us, to rouse the Southern people to a revolution which would throw off the bonds of the Union. It is well known and proudly admitted that, had that flag been hoisted over the Capitol of the United States, under the open proclamations of the election, I for one would have waited for no other "overt act" of aggression or oppression; but I was, therefore, the more anxious to secure a Democratic triumph, to prevent revolution and to preserve the Union. This separated me from the extremists South.

I doubt whether they would all have followed me to the lengths I would have gone, had cause for revolution been given; but whilst I was for warding off extreme issues by electing a conservative Democrat who could unite all patriots and save the Union, they, a small and very exclusive clique, were for driving us upon revolution—reluctantly supported the Democratic nominee, and at heart were disappointed at the Democratic triumph which saved us from all "last extremities." The horse and the rider of Black Republicanism were overthrown, but in the general rejoicing there was no shout from the hearts of the *Exclusive Extremists*. They, however honest, were sad, and their countenances were dark and dismal in the midst of general congratulations and smiles that the National Democracy had saved our country once more from extreme peril.

Soon after the election of President, and during all of last winter and spring, that which was at first a whisper became more and more audible, until it broke out into a loud and openly uttering voice, "that there was a plot to supplant Mr. Hunter in the Senate, by Governor Wise and his friends." Knowing that there was no foundation for this in aught I had said or done or authorized to be said or done, and the hypothesis presenting itself that there might be enemies of both Mr. Hunter and myself who were trying to sow tares between us for their own selfish and sinister ends, I still averted my mind from other definite conclusions respecting the authors and the motives of those reports, and continued to remain silent. But the time came for the organization of Mr. Buchanan's cabinet. It was arranged by himself, to his own liking, on his own responsibility, to suit his own confidential relations in office, and was composed of a majority of Southern men, of all sections of Southern Democracy, preferring no clique, and of a caste designed to harmonize all elements in the party, North and South, East and West. It was organized on the National platform of the Cincinnati Convention. As the head and representative of the party, he generalized as well as he could the personnel and material of the *great Democracy of the United States*. This was what a *President of the United States* should have endeavored to do. It might not please all, individually or sectionally, but it was *for all and not for a part*. And the great mass of the party was well content and generally acquiesced in the organization. But the President had hardly been inaugurated, had but just taken his seat, had said nothing and done nothing, besides his inaugural address and selection of his cabinet, defining or indicating a policy—had not been in office sixty

days—not thirty—when a *Porcupine Opposition* raised a quill at every point of policy and at every man of personnl in the Administration, and the attempt was made to damn the whole Democratic party of the North, and every Southern man who trusted them, with doubt or distrust or outspoken denunciation. An affiliated press was found organized from Richmond to New Orleans, which opened its batteries of sweeping, rancorous, and vindictive opposition, denouncing certain members of the cabinet, and especially certain Southern members, misgiving as to the foreign, and exciting suspicion as to the home policy—warning against imaginary evils—doubting the good faith of some friends—disparaging others—not sparing the President himself—and especially denouncing a *National Democracy*. And all this was begun and published too before *Gov. Walker* was ever sent to Kansas. *We were to be betrayed before we were betrayed! The Northern Democracy were not to be relied on! The President himself was of that Democracy!*

Now, gentlemen, prior to the campaign of 1856, there were but two lines of sectional division in the United States—the Mason and Dixon, and the Missouri Compromise lines. They were geographical, partly, in their character, and were well defined and understood. Many evils growing out of them had been in the past, and could be in the future, guarded against. But, in 1856, another and more ominous line was disclosed, obliterating all others. It was not defined upon the earth, but revealing itself by what sailors call a “Sun-Dog” in the East, it awed superstition like an angry comet portending evil, and shot a dull black and white gloom looming through the mists of the Arctic iceberg—striking from over Old England, by the Newfoundland banks, cutting off all New England and New York, and passing midway through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and, indefinitely, Westward. All North of that line was *Black Republican*, and all South of it was what was called *Egypt*.

What did this mean? What portend? Why, it was a sign in the very heavens of the wisdom of Washington’s Farewell Address—to beware of *Foreign Influence and Sectional Strife*. The constant commercial and social intercourse of New England and New York with Old England, and the immediate neighborhood of the Lake border with Canada, had let in the wolf of English feeling and prejudice and social habit and fanaticism and influence into our fold against the institutions of the whole United States, as established by our Constitutions of Government. It is the most insidious foe which has ever invaded our country. It is English influence, operating socially, undermining our institutions, and threatening our peace and safety, bound up in the cords of our National Union. In this sense it is *this nation—this whole nation—our nation* against its old enemy—English influence. And who met that influence and backed it from off our nation’s soil, past the Mason and Dixon and past the Missouri line, as far North as the “Sun-Dog” line, which divided *Black Republican* from *Egypt*? It was Democracy—Northern Democracy—National Democracy! The same true sort of patriotic Americanism—of Brother Jonathanism—which fought at Erie and Plattsburg and Lundy’s Lane, and drove John Bull back into Canada! That is the sort of Nationality I love and cherish, as I love and honor my country—my whole country. With true devotion, in the midst of non-slaveholding passions and prejudices—with no ties or associations of their own with slavery, except National—with Fanaticism thundering Church anathemas and excommunication over their heads—they, the Northern Democracy, whether in majorities or proscribed minorities, with strong nerves, with steady and unwavering faith, taxed themselves with heavy contributions, and raised the National Flag of protection over our Constitution of Government, over our property of every sort, over good faith among men, over State rights and State equality, over popular self-government, over the States separately and united, over the United States, and battled for us and for all, and drove back the insidious and foreign foe to the Sun-Dog line, where it yet glooms in defeat. Nothing is so fatally sure to kindle the pale and sickly beam of that “blue light” line of sectionalism into a lurid flame of fire to devour our country, as for Southern Democracy to doubt, distrust or denounce Northern Democracy, after such noble sacrifices as those they made in the campaign of 1856. The Southern Democracy never has done this, and never will, until *Nationality, in the sense of American patriotism and devotion to the Union of the American States*, ceases to burn in American bosoms every where North and South.

Nationality in opposition to Democracy or State rights, I oppose. I oppose all that sort of *Federal Nationality* which would consolidate us into one centralized des-

potism. I loathe that sort of Nationality which proposes and adopts *Compromises* of any sort, *of the Constitution or for the Constitution*. But the *Nationality of Democracy*, which supports and defends the Constitution and its strict construction, which maintains State rights and State equality and keeps the faith of compacts, which guards the Union and the country, against foreign and domestic foes, I honor and cherish and glory in! And this is the National Democracy which this Opposition, openly developed as early as April last, in the South, assails. If this be stricken down, what have we to rely on or to ally with in the North? And, yet, it was to strike at this—it was to follow up, not to begin the blows, that the moment a Governor was sent to Kansas and he moved in his office, *his speeches* were seized on as a pretext to assail the Northern Democracy and the Administration and its friends. Destroy confidence in these, and then the riot of ruin would begin. It was then that conservative Democrats began to ask—*Is this opposition or not?—if this be what is called the backing of friends, what is the opposition of foes? Is this Opposition dangerous or not? Whose is it? Who are responsible for it? Who backs it? Whence does it come?—to what tend?* It was no time to stop and dally with the minor matter of Mr. Walker's stump speeches—delivered with what motive, to what end—pro or con slavery—with good or bad design, no one could fairly decide, without knowing all the surrounding circumstances and difficulties in which he was involved. He had been a Mississippi Senator. He had been honored and trusted by the South. He had done more for the annexation of Texas than any Southern Senator. He had been Secretary of the Treasury under a Southern President, and had done more for Free Trade than any man before or since his time in the cabinet. Surely the President could trust him not to betray the South which he had thus served and which had thus honored and trusted him, and not to betray the North which had borne him. And he is an able and sagacious man too, whose talents might be trusted to form the best judgment on the spot as to the best and most politic movements. But whether he acted wisely or foolishly, sagaciously or had blundered, or his intentions were good or bad, *his acts and motives* were nothing, *compared with the weightier matters of the country involved in this sudden and insidious opposition*, which gave no time for developments, or for dispassionate examination and proof, or even for just condemnation of him, if he had done wrong—but began a hot and heavy war upon him as a corrupt "*satrap*," a felon traitor! This could not but reflect upon the Administration and the party which appointed and retained him in place. It was not ingenuous to pretend to discriminate between the "President and the Governor of the Territory." "Like man, like master." If he was this criminal, Mr. Buchanan was bound to know it, and if he knew it, he was no better, but rather worse than Governor Walker. This reasoning this opposition knew would seize on the public mind, and would, if uncontradicted, impair confidence in the Administration. It was making an adverse impression rapidly, when the "Enquirer" interposed with its trenchant pen, as of old, and arrested the rush of the charge on the National Democracy and its representatives in power. It took up the enquiry: "Is not this rank hostility? Is not this a prepared and premature opposition before the Administration has begun its course—before it has met its first Congress, or sent its first message? What does it mean? Whose is it? Who backs it?" I thank the "Enquirer" for that blow. The shade of the Old Napoleon of the press smiled in his parental hovering over the "Enquirer," when that sturdy blow fell in its stroke for his darling Democracy. In my inmost heart I felt right well when that brave blow was struck. It was brave and bold to strike it; for the Public Printing, as well as the Senatorship, was at stake, it seems. The activity in the elections last spring looked not only to the incumbency of Mr. Hunter, but to the incumbency of the "Enquirer" too; and, doubtless, to all the great interests involved. The "Enquirer," assuredly, has saved the Democracy of Virginia from being involved in this Porcupine opposition.

All this time, it was not known whether Mr. Hunter took any part in this opposition, though many of his most active partizans did; and hence it was suspected that if he was *not* a participant in it, he was to be the beneficiary of it, if it should succeed. Certain it is that what was at first rumor and surmise about my alleged design to contest with him his seat in the Senate, was turned at last into a taunt to me and my friends. "*Run, if you dare, you cannot beat Mr. Hunter.*" It was vain to reply: "*I do not desire to beat him.*" The taunt came back: "*You do, or you do not desire to beat him. If you do, we are taking the steps to defeat you; and, if you*

don't, you will be defeated any how. In either event it will be seemingly manifest that he is stronger in Virginia than you are." It was useless to protest that there was no desire to impair his strength—an issue with him was seemingly prepared to be forced upon me, knowing that he was safe in incumbency, and that there could, perhaps, be no issue joined except a personal one. When, therefore, my friends demanded of me to meet the defiance, I positively declined to do so unless Mr. Hunter should avow that he was of this opposition and backed it, took its responsibility and tendered its issues against the Administration and the National Democracy. *I had no issue with him, unless he had an issue with them. If he had, I was ready to cross swords with him, not otherwise.* I was not willing to part from him and yield him up to the extremists, who were endeavoring to claim his authority, and *exclusively to appropriate his re-election to the Senate as a triumph to themselves.* He has come out, and his letters are open to the fair interpretation of all. I think their meaning is: that he does not express any warm or strong confidence in the Administration; that he does not wish to be understood as being one of its especial friends or partizans; but, that he does disclaim the opposition to it, by saying that he "*hopes and expects to be able to support the Administration in the main.*" Now, "*hope*" is made up of desire, affiance and expectation. He desires, then, and doubly expects to be able to support the Administration in the main. And this being so, he cannot, of course, desire or expect the opposition thereto to succeed. Saying that he knows of no practical tests at this time, which will bring him into collision with the Administration, he distinctly disclaims, for aught he can see at present, both the intent or will and the spirit or purpose of the opposition. He, in a word, ignores responsibility for this opposition, which has risen so suddenly and which is so sweeping in the South. *With this declaration of his, so understood, I have no issue with Mr. Hunter.*

It is true that he seems to be opposed to the submission of the Constitution of Kansas by her Convention, to the bona fide inhabitants and legal voters of that territory. He takes the ground that if the people are silent about the power of the Convention in this respect, that if the Convention was not expressly restrained from proclaiming whatever form they adopt as the Constitution of the State, then they have the power so to proclaim it, and to send it to Congress, without submitting it to the people. I know that there are precedents for this exercise of power by Conventions, but the precedents are in their inception exceptionable cases, and the doctrine which upholds them is, in my humble opinion, anti-democratic. The true doctrine is, *that the powers not delegated by the people are reserved to them. They may grant such a power to the Convention; but if not granted, it is reserved, that a Constitution, formed and proposed by a Convention, which is but a representative body, shall be submitted to the people, who alone are sovereign.* The Convention to form a Constitution is not sovereign or supreme. The act of making a State is the highest act of sovereign power, and is the act of humanity, next highest to that of Deity, in making a being of any sort. *The act is no less than to create a sovereignty itself.* As a Democratic Republican, then, I would never delegate conventional powers to any body of agents to create a State, without requiring them to submit the act to their principals, the people. In 1776, an unauthorized body of patriots assembled at Williamsburg, constituted themselves a Convention, and formed and proclaimed a Constitution for Virginia, without submitting it to the votes of the colonists. But revolution began in that way. There was no time and no opportunity to poll votes, in a moment of rebellion, under the domination of British arms.

The masses never did make a revolution—never can and never will. A devoted and self-sacrificing few must ever take the initiative and lead the first movements of resistance. It required a Patrick Henry to seize the powder of the old magazine, and the Convention of 1776 snatched liberty for the people, rather than a constitution from them. In such times *inter arma silent leges.* The *salus populi* was then the plea and the justification. But what does the *salus populi* call for in piping times of peace, when there are none to make us afraid at the polls of a Republic? Why a very different rule and order of proceeding, when there is time and place and opportunity of consulting the sovereign people themselves, protected in their assemblies and votes. Accordingly, when Virginia formed a Constitution a second time, in 1829-30, and a third time in 1850-51, the form adopted by the Convention was in both instances submitted to the legal voters—aye, more, *to the new voters created by the new form before itself was adopted.* That the people shall of right judge for themselves, at the polls, of their own organic law, unless they expressly authorize agents

to make and to adopt a Constitution for them, is a principle for which, as a member of the last Convention of Virginia, I would have contended as strenuously as I did for any other principle of popular sovereignty or of self-government. There was no such authority delegated by the people to the Convention of Kansas. Yet, if upon precedent, the Convention of Kansas adopts a Republican form of State Government, and reports it to Congress, without submitting it to the people, I agree with Mr. Hunter in accepting it and voting to receive Kansas as a State—slave or free—into the Union. And why? Because, first, of precedent, and secondly, whether it be accepted or rejected, it has to be submitted, or is subject at last, in either event, to the popular will. If a majority do not approve of the Constitution, they may organize another Convention immediately, and adopt any republican form, after they are once a State, *without submitting it at all to Congress*. The question now is, then, not whether Congress should adopt or reject the Constitution of Kansas, submitted to the popular vote or not, but **WHETHER IT OUGHT NOT TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE PEOPLE BEFORE IT IS SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS?** Which is the better policy for the pro-slavery party to pursue? to submit the Constitution at once to the people, and have an end of the agitation, or to continue the shrieks for freedom a while longer? If a majority of the legal voters are opposed to the plan of government proposed by the Convention, their voices ought to prevail; a constitutional form ought *not to be imposed* upon them, and *cannot* be but for a day, and their sovereign power ought not to be snatched from them even for a moment. If Congress should aid and abet a CONVENTION IN DOING SO, WOULD NOT CONGRESS BE INTERVENING AGAINST NON-INTERVENTION? And if a majority is in favor of the form proposed, they will prevail, and the controversy will end. If strict impartiality, justice and fairness are observed, the people will not be incensed; but if a minority shall abuse the adventitious advantage of an organized Convention to send their Constitution to Congress, without first submitting it to the *people*, they will be goaded by indignation to acts of violence, they will tear the Constitution into tatters and trample it into the dust, and upbraid the pro-slavery party with a willingness and an attempt to rule *per fas aut nefas*, and they will organize more stringently, doubtless against slavery, than they would ever have done at first. Again: if the Constitution be submitted to them first, it must be submitted to Congress afterwards, to see that its provisions are republican, and it must pass in review of the Representatives in Congress as well as in the Territory. But, if not submitted to the people in the first instance, and Congress accepts it, and then the people of Kansas change and adopt another and, it may be, a worse Constitution, this latter will not have to be, and will not be, submitted to Congress at all. Aiming then at the same end, to protect the equal rights of slaveholders, and to end the excitement and strife soonest and safest, which is the better policy, to appeal to the people at once, in a peaceful, fair and just mode, or to be obliged at last to abide by their anger and resentment, after impairing our own moral attitude before the country? Are we not in danger of having our attitude impaired by another question which has arisen since Mr. Hunter's letters were written? If Gov. Walker did not go behind the returns which he proclaims were "fraudulent and simulated" on their face—and whether they were so or not, we have, as yet, no means of determining—which were no returns—in a word, if this be true, he did right, of course, in disregarding and setting them aside. He usurped no authority, if his report be true, and but did his duty in repudiating **FRAUD UPON THE ELECTIVE FRANCHISE**, and in spurning the insult which demanded that he should give it his official sanction and countenance. An executive has no judicial or legislative power, and must not dare to usurp either; but it is something more than merely ministerial authority, and has the right of protecting itself from fraud and imposition. The ministerial officer even has that power. Forms were made to preserve the substance of justice and truth, not to aid fraud and imposture, and falsehood and injustice. Slaveholders and the people of slaveholding States are too high in their moral tone, to consent to owe the establishment of slavery any where to means like these. And yet some of the sublime oppositionists who profess to despise treachery in Gov. Walker, in this age of lawlessness and violence, do not hesitate to array expediency against justice, and to arraign a Governor of a Territory because he dared to refuse to be *particeps criminis* in what he knew to be a gross and patent fraud! Mr. Hunter, I am sure, will not endorse or countenance such immorality as this. And a difference on the other points, where we do not agree, shall not divide me from him. He is eminently right in one particular—that Congress has no right to prescribe the elec-

tive franchise for the voters of Kansas on the adoption of their Constitution. The *bona fide inhabitants*, by their Legislature or Convention, must prescribe that for themselves. By this I am far from reflecting upon the Rockingham resolutions; for I understand them to mean and to express the same thing. I know not by whom, or where, they were written; heard not of the meeting before it was held, and the resolutions were published some days before I saw them or knew of them; but judging from themselves alone, they seem to me to agree with Mr. Hunter in contravening the ideas which were at first started by his own friends, that only a *particular class of voters, at first defined by act of Congress*, were to be allowed to decide upon the adoption of the Constitution, if submitted to the people. Mr. Hunter takes ground with the "Enquirer" from the start on that point, though, I think, he had no occasion to take it in combatting the Rockingham resolutions, which don't controvert it at all, but, on the contrary, contend for the principle of the Kansas bill itself—that *the people must be left to govern themselves*, without the intervention of Congress or any other power.

When Governor Walker's nomination shall be made to the Senate of the United States, if made at all, it will go before Mr. Hunter as one of the Senators who are to try its fitness and propriety. And, if upon a full and fair examination of his course and conduct in Kansas, he finds that the Governor has exceeded his authority, has violated his oath of office or his duty in office, or has betrayed the high and sacred trust reposed in him to see the laws, and especially the Kansas bill, faithfully executed, and to see that all the people from all sections were alike, equally and impartially protected—then Mr. Hunter will be reprehensible, indeed, if he does not vote to reject his nomination, and to rebuke the mal-administration. If Governor Walker has really attempted to dictate to, and to threaten the Convention or the people of Kansas, in any form or to any extent, he deserves the severest reprehension. But, before he is condemned, he ought to be heard by his *judges*, who are to sit officially upon his acts. If I am not greatly mistaken in the ability and motives of the man, he may be able to show that the very words of his speech, quoted by Mr. Hunter, are capable of a far different meaning, and are any thing but unfriendly to the South or to slavery. He may have meant to throw upon Topeka partizans the responsibility of not voting, so that if a pro-slavery Constitution should be sent to Congress, the plea could not be put up that the people were not implored to vote and decide the issue for themselves. And, instead of meaning to dictate or to threaten, his very words quoted may have meant simply to *remind the Convention that their work was to be submitted to a body—Congress—which had solemnly settled the principles, that the PEOPLE of the Territory were to adopt or reject their civil institutions for themselves, without intervention from any quarter.* This may have been and seems to have been, an awkward way of conveying the meaning, as it is so easily misunderstood; but if that turns out to be the true meaning, Mr. Hunter might find he had mistaken a friend for a foe. But, surely, it is not expected of Mr. Hunter or myself, at this distance, with total want of correct information, as to his motives or measures, to condemn the Governor of Kansas, with a purpose prepense to reflect on the Administration and to damn all who honestly doubt and defer judgment to a fair hearing. I know Mr. Walker very well, and have seen his nerve tried. I would prefer that he had *acted* in his office rather than have *made speeches on the stump*, but he will, in due time—I suppose, merely, for I am not informed of his intentions—make his defence, and then we shall know better how to find our verdicts. If he be guilty, as charged, I shall join strongly in his condemnation. And if I find him void of offence, clear in his office, I will respond "*not guilty*," without fear, favor or affection, so help me, when I ask for justice, in spite of all political clamor, though I shall stand alone on the panel. I have been too long tried in my truth to the South, and to slavery, to fear any false imputation upon my motives, though my judgment in the case may be erroneous when rendered. It is not rendered yet.

So, then, these points being, though material, open, some of them to a fair difference of opinion, and others to further investigation and proof; and Mr. Hunter disclaiming the spirit and purpose of opposition, by expressing the desire and expectation to be able to support the Administration in the main, I make no issue with him; and with my understanding of his pledges, I cannot allow my name to distract and divide the Virginia Democracy in opposition to his re-election. I can have no personal issue with Mr. Hunter; our relations have ever been too friendly to admit of any other acts on my part than those of kindness. He is an eminently able and long

experienced statesman, and cannot be well spared, by the Democracy of the State, as long as he desires and expects to support the party which it so triumphantly put into power against the foes of the South. And the South needs, at this time especially, to be united, and cannot afford a division on immaterial or personal issues. Whether there be a disposition to sacrifice me or not, I am ready to be made a victim, if it will unite the South, bind to our affection and confidence the true patriots of the North, defend the Constitution and State Rights, preserve the Union, and keep the peace of the country in the bonds only of an equal and amicable confederacy.

You say right, in saying that I am not responsible for the editorials of the Enquirer, nor is the Enquirer responsible for my opinions or course. No paper has been authorized to speak for me on the subject of this letter. I have organized no presses, and I have exacted or asked for no pledges of candidates for seats in the Legislature. Much that I have seen in your paper I do, and some things I do not approve. Some of your editorials have rather too sweepingly denounced "secessionists" and "fire-eaters." You have explained whom you meant, but I wish you had called other names than those with which your humble servant himself has ever been denounced. I am one of those who believe in the rightful remedy of a separation from the Confederacy, whenever the exercise of that State right is demanded by good and sufficient cause. And, if the exercise of that right is not peaceably permitted, it may be enforced by the appeal to arms. The Farewell Address of Washington is the old, and the Virginia resolutions of '98-99 are the new testament of my political faith. I will maintain the Union to the last extremity, and fight for it to the last inch of ground left to stand on; but when there is no other alternative but subjugation or dishonor, from either palpable infractions of the Constitution, or from intolerable oppression under its forms, I care not which, I will, if I must, fight out of the Union, if I can. "If that be treason, make the most of it."

Mr. Buchanan and his Administration have my most cordial confidence, and I shall support them so long as they do no more wrong than they have as yet perpetrated. But I will not pledge my support blindly and implicitly, without exception, and I require no such pledge from Mr. Hunter.

In conclusion, let me aver that I do *not* desire a seat in the Senate of the United States, and if I did, I would not desire it at Mr. Hunter's expense. I trust that he and his friends do not desire his re-election at my expense, and that in future I may be relieved from the penalty of being deemed his rival for that place.

Whether the Legislature will make the election this coming session, or postpone it to a time nearer the termination of the six years of the present term, it does not become me to speak. They will decide that question in their own way and time, without my presuming to interfere.

Having as fully responded as my severe labors will allow just at this time, I hope to be allowed to work on, undisturbed in future by any controversy respecting a seat in the Senate of the United States involving the name of

Yours, truly,

HENRY A. WISE.

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